



## **Jewish Community Center of Greater Pittsburgh**

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### **JCC's Counselors-in-Training are Inspired by Israel Tour**

Counselors-In-Training from the Jewish Community Center of Greater Pittsburgh's overnight camping program, Emma Kaufmann Camp, recently returned to EKC with new vision and ideas after a 3 ½-week trip to Israel. The Israel Leadership Program, in its fifth consecutive year, is a program of the JCC and the Partnership 2000 program of the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh.

"It's a very positive experience for our teens," said Adam Baron, Assistant Director of EKC, who organizes the CIT program. "We feel that it's the best way to spend your summer—being in camp with your camp friends and being in Israel."

This year, 47 teens are in the CIT program, bringing the total to almost 170 young people who have participated in the Israel Leadership Seminar. The vast majority of the CITs return as EKC staff members in subsequent years.

A highlight of the trip was a six-day visit to Partnership 2000's and Pittsburgh's sister city and region of Carmiel and Misgav, where the CITs met and participated in activities with Israeli teens and families.

The Israel trip, developed with the JCC Association, also included stays on kibbutzim, workshops about Jewish identity, Israel and Judaism and the environment; hikes through the desert and the hills at Safat; snorkeling in the Red Sea and floating on the Dead Sea; and hands-on archeological experiences. The group visited Massada at sunrise and the Roman Theater at Caesarea; walked through the Old City of Jerusalem and toured the border of Egypt.

Many participants in this program feel the Israel trip is transformative. A mother of a participant this year recently wrote that her son "loved every moment in Israel and I mean every second of every day. In my experience, when the kids return home from EKC, I always see so much growth and maturity. But this was absolutely astounding. (He) grew by leaps and bounds. It was simply the most amazing trip."

The group recently returned to EKC where their new experiences and leadership skills are enhancing their work as CITs. "They're doing programming with campers and staff that directly relates to their experiences in Israel," Baron said. "The CITs helped plan an Israel Day program to teach campers about Israel and the importance of Israel."

Emma Kaufmann Camp, the JCC's resident overnight camp, is situated in the beautiful hills and forests along Cheat Lake in Morgantown, West Virginia, providing opportunities for adventures, sports and recreational activities on land and water. EKC camping programs, for kids entering grades 2 through 10, run through August 15, 2010.

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